

NASA, some of my constituents and some of my heroes, who devote their lives to doing the impossible for our Nation and our world, will spend the next decade and more on a technological and visionary quest: To send and resend the shuttle fleet into space to complete the International Space Station; to examine with unprecedented vigor and precision in the galaxy's preeminent laboratory the long-term exposure of the human body to microgravity and radiation; to design and construct the next generation of American spacecraft; to return to the moon; and to plot and endeavor a manned mission to Mars.

The exploration of the unknown is one of the innate motivating forces of our species. That universal and ancient yearning will be satisfied today by NASA's heroic "corps of discovery" in a mission not to conquer space, but to conquer human ignorance.

The darkness will be lighted, and this afternoon seven heroes will carry the torch of human discovery into the void.

Our future in space is still unknown and unknowable: The station remains incomplete, the moon is still years away, and Mars is still a red speck in the night sky, but today's launch is a step toward our destiny.

And like all steps into the unknown, the voyage of *Discovery*, T-minus 5 hours and 40 minutes, will prove the next giant leap in "the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked."

VETERAN FUNDING SHORTFALL

(Mr. SALAZAR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. Speaker, as a veteran, I have made a pledge to serve my country, and because of my desire to defend the ideals of democracy that I still cherish.

As part of our commitment, the Army promised all veterans a variety of benefits. In the past several years, I have seen some of those promises turn from honored commitments to veterans and their families to empty words that seem to be worth nothing more than the paper they are written on.

Mr. Speaker, 2 weeks ago, we were informed the Veterans Administration would fall short by more than a billion dollars of what is needed to provide critical services to veterans. I was angered and dismayed at this gross negligence and oversight and spoke before this very House in strong support of the emergency spending bill passed 2 weeks ago.

We will soon be seeing another request from the President to complete the needed funding for the health care of our Nation's veterans. I will support this measure too because I support our veterans, but it is absurd and it is a crying shame that the health of veterans boils down to bitter partisan fights.

As Democrats, we have repeatedly demanded full funding for our veterans' needs. It is our duty to fully fund the Veterans Administration and do it right the first time, not after three or four attempts.

WELCOMING ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, birth is a happy event for all peoples. We rejoice because we hope that child will make the world better. Every time a child is born, the Good Lord is making a bet on the future of mankind. We do not pick our parents, and we do not get to pick the country of our birth. And we who are born in the U.S.A. are the most fortunate of all people in the history of the world.

Last night in Waco, Texas, about the time the sun was going down, 8:29 p.m., Elizabeth Lenna Alexander was born, 7 pounds 3 ounces, July 12, 2005. The world she has been born into is full of the good and the not so good.

Our country must always be willing to protect the greatest resource, the innocent of our country, the soul of our future, our children.

It is my hope that her parents, Kara and Shane Alexander, will raise Elizabeth with a sense of justice and compassion, community, courage, and a deep sense and concern for liberty.

So Elizabeth, as your grandfather, I welcome you to the U.S.A. Make it a better place, a place of more freedom.

URGING CANDOR ON IRAQ

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, you cannot solve a problem if you do not acknowledge that you have a problem. In that light, I appreciate and applaud the comments of outgoing Under Secretary of Defense Doug Feith made to the Washington Post concerning the costly mistakes made in Iraq.

During a recent interview, Mr. Feith said, "It is an extremely complex judgment to know whether the course that we chose with its pros and cons was more sensible."

Further, he noted the transfer of power to Iraqis did not happen fast enough and that we were not able to train the Iraqis.

Mr. Feith's comments stand in contrast to the President's inability and unwillingness to acknowledge any errors made in the Iraq war effort.

The administration did a great job planning for a quick victory on the battlefield and for occupation, yet things have not turned out as planned. Some of today's challenges are a direct result of those mistakes made by the administration.

After 1,800 American lives, more than 10,000 wounded American GIs and \$340 billion with no end in sight, now is the time to level with the American people. If we are going to be successful, we must work together, and to work together, you must be frank and honest.

Mr. Feith, thank you for your recent candor. Mr. President, we can do it. We are here to help, but it starts with truth and candor.

UTILIZING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, how do you haul corn, soybeans, fertilizer, petroleum products, coal and rock from Chicago, Illinois, to the port of New Orleans, or from the port of New Orleans up to Chicago, Illinois, without taking 870 tractor-trailer trucks over our highway system? That is 870 trucks that burn diesel fuel, 870 trucks that clog our interstate highway system, 870 trucks that made some of our roads less safe.

Mr. Speaker, you do it by the river, by the Mississippi River system. That is one of the best ways in which we can be an environmental steward, by getting all of these trucks off the road. That is one of the best ways that we can unclog our highway and transportation system. That is one of the best ways that we get a better return on investments and lower price fuels is by doing that.

The Water Resources Development Act, which we will take up on the floor this afternoon and tomorrow, is the best way to be a good environmental steward, energy security, and promote the well-being of all Americans. I ask Members support for passage.

VALERIE PLAME'S IDENTITY

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, when news broke early this week that Karl Rove was involved in the outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame, it was clear that either Karl Rove had been withholding his involvement from the White House, or that the White House knew of his involvement and falsely allowed the public to believe he had no role in the scandal.

This Congress should be outraged by Mr. Rove's involvement and should be demanding answers from both him and the White House. I would like to know when exactly, if ever, President Bush was told of Mr. Rove's involvement. If the President did indeed know, that means that the White House is involved in a coverup which should be investigated by this House.

Mr. Rove's actions are a major abuse of power. Valerie Plame was a covert